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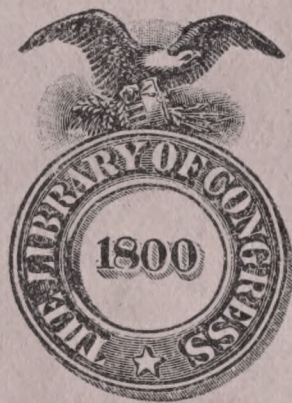
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In Re MORTON McMICHAEL

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EDITED BY

ALBERT MORDELL

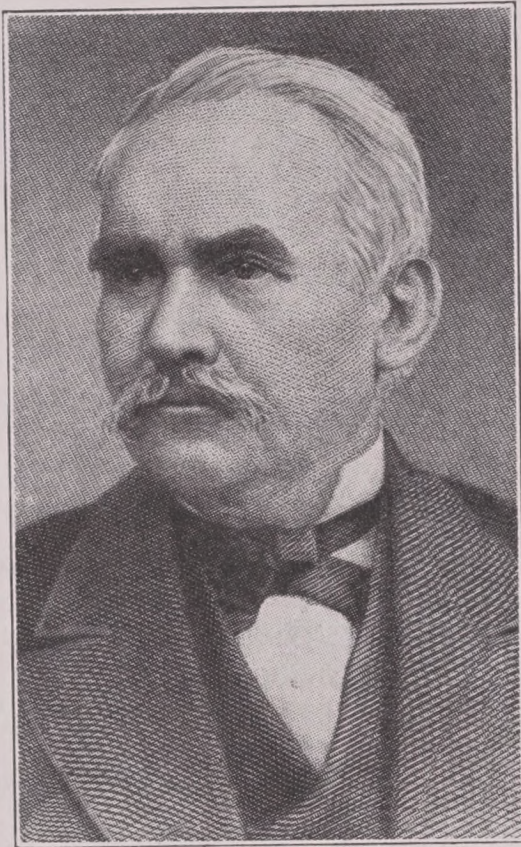


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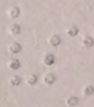
✓ *In Re* MORTON McMICHAEL.

INCLUDING

Unpublished Letters by Henry Clay,
William M. Thackeray
and Others



Edited by
ALBERT MORDELL, Esq. ✓
" *Of The Philadelphia Bar*



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FOREWORD

MORTON McMICHAEL

By

CHARLES B. McMICHAEL

The phase of the mental activity of Morton McMichael described by Mr. Albert Mordell, was when the former was editor of several magazines and literary publications from about 1828 to 1844. Mr. Mordell has shown how appreciative Morton McMichael was of the early manifestations of genius of the American poets, Poe and Lowell; they lived in Philadelphia during a portion of that period and wrote for the magazines he edited; and Mr. Mordell has alluded to the productive work of Morton McMichael. N. P. Willis is another American author who wrote for the magazines edited by Morton McMichael.

The early life-work of Morton McMichael was devoted to encouraging and fostering American authors and literature. He was also an orator to whom attention had been drawn when he was very young by his address of welcome when LaFayette revisited America. Later Morton McMichael was invited to New England, where he made an address which was considered a model of eloquence. I think he took more pride in this oration than any other. He spoke from the same platform as Edward Everett, and told me, when I once asked him about his New England address, that he was satisfied with it, but others told me that he surpassed Everett. Other addresses that confirmed his fame as an orator were

his patriotic speech at the Academy of Music just prior to the Civil War and his speech when a sword was presented to General Meade by the City of Philadelphia at the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac on the Rapahannock River in 1862; his speech as Chairman of the Republican Convention which nominated General Grant for a second term; his speech when the ground in Fairmount Park was given to the Centennial Exhibition; his address at the dedication of the John Welsh memorial at the U. of P.—all of these I heard, altho I was a mere boy, for I never missed an opportunity to listen to him. He was ready as an impromptu speaker and his memory was extraordinary. When he had written an address he never looked at it a second time, but the stenographic report of his speech would correspond *verbatim et literatim* with the original draft.

After his term as sheriff ended, he purchased the "North American," and the "United States Gazette." He owned and edited those papers until his death. His active career as a journalist was from 1844 until 1879. In politics he was a Whig while that party was in existence and he was an admirer and friend of Henry Clay. He was a delegate to the convention that first nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency and from that time was a Republican until his death.

Morton McMichael was considered for the Vice Presidency of the United States when General Grant was nominated for the second term. The Ambassadorship to Great Britain was tendered to him by General Grant, but he declined it. Morton McMichael thought he could not afford to live with the dignity which the Embassy to Great Britain required. He was also considered for a cabinet position by General Grant. General Grant dined at my father's house with several

members of his cabinet, among others James G. Blaine, and the subject of the ambassadorship and the cabinet position was spoken of at that time. Among others at this dinner was his son, Fred. Grant, afterwards General Frederick Grant, who was about my age. Morton McMichael was temporary Chairman of the Convention that nominated General Grant for a second term, but he opposed the nomination of General Grant for a third term.

He was President of the Park Commission of Philadelphia from 1864 to 1879, from the time of its original inception until his death. He was a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1873 and after the death of William M. Meredith, presided over the Convention.

My earliest recollections of him hark back to the old office of the "North American" on Third Street opposite Dock. I remember very well the numerous "omnibus lines" which had their terminus there and I have a hazy impression of the old Post Office. I saw Abraham Lincoln raise the flag at Independence Hall in February, 1861, and I met President Lincoln, who was with the delegation to the Army of the Potomac in 1862 when the sword was presented to General Meade. I also saw an incident similar to the one which has been dramatically presented by Drinkwater in his play on Lincoln. I remember very well that just before the party started from Washington for the front, a woman threw herself on her knees before President Lincoln and begged the life of her son, a young soldier, who had been sentenced to death for sleeping on his post. The President granted a pardon to the boy.

During the War of the Rebellion the Editorial Office of the "North American" was the meeting place of many distinguished men, William M. Meredith, J. I.

Clark Hare, Charles Gilpin, Charles Gibbons, George Boker and others. And it was there Hon. J. I. Clark Hare suggested the idea of the Union Club which afterwards developed into the Union League.

I used to spend my Saturday morning holidays at the "North American" office and was an eager listener to the brilliant talk of these distinguished gentlemen.

I went away to Harvard College in 1866 and after my return in 1870, I began the study of law and was admitted to the Philadelphia bar in 1872.

Shortly after this I went to Europe with my father and we visited Great Britain and the Continent. He was welcomed and entertained by English Statesmen and altho I did not go with him to all formal dinners, I became acquainted with many famous literary and dramatic people: Charles Reade, Henry Irving, the family of Charles Dickens, the Sotherns, Mr. and Mrs. Dion Boucicault, Chevalier Wykoff, Planchet and many others. Among those in England who entertained my father were the Ex-Emperor Napoleon III, the Duke of Devonshire, John Morley and Junius S. Morgan, the father of John Pierpont Morgan.

Until the death of my father I was his constant companion. Even as a young boy he had taken me with him upon many journeys through Pennsylvania and I used to go to the theatre with him every Monday night from the time I was a boy of ten until just before his death, except during the years I was at college.

As he was an orator himself, he hoped, I daresay, to make one of me, and he had me trained in elocution by Murdock, the actor, who was a teacher of that art, but his oratorical gift seemed to descend to my brothers, William and Clayton, but not to me.

My father never spoke a harsh word to me or to any of his family, nor did I ever hear him speak un-

kindly of or to any human being. He was as joyous and considerate at home as when in the company of his most intimate companions. He let me choose the college I preferred and the profession I thought I could succeed best in—Harvard College and the Law, respectively, and although I daresay he grieved a bit that I did not show more oratorical talent, he seemed to realize that I would work hard in my profession.

The bond between us was strong, and his personality was so marked and my love for him so great, that altho he died more than forty years ago, I miss him continuously. It seems as tho we must meet again. Who knows? He had a happy life and one which was of use to the community in which he lived.

He had hosts of friends, a loving family and no enemies. There is written on the base of his statue in Fairmount Park, "A beloved Citizen of Philadelphia," and that is a true epitome of his public life and character.

Morton McMichael was careless of his posthumous fame, and made no effort to preserve his speeches or literary productions. I thought it might interest his descendants to have the foregoing brief reminiscences preserved and set down and also to have published some of the many letters he received from Henry Clay, John M. Clayton and other statesmen with whom he was intimate, and from William Makepeace Thackeray, the novelist.

I think the greatest services Morton McMichael rendered the City of Philadelphia were when, as sheriff, he quelled the Anti Catholic riots, and when as Mayor, by his vision and by his energy he foresaw and made a reality of Fairmount Park. To that great undertaking he devoted the years from 1864 to 1879.

THE LITERARY CAREER OF
MORTON McMICHAEL*

By

ALBERT MORDELL

It often happens that men who have supreme gifts in a particular direction, divert themselves to other spheres for various reasons. Many people who possess faculties that are both unusual and highly developed, suddenly cease exercising them to take up other lines of activity. There can be no question that some of the world's great merchants, diplomats and statesmen would have shone in other Departments had they chosen to concentrate all their energies therein. There have been cases where men have been equally great in several spheres. Lord Beaconsfield, for example, who was both a great novelist and a great Statesman. It no doubt some times proves unfortunate that some men suspend as it were, their gifts to take up something that is either more practical or popular.

Morton McMichael, the subject of this sketch, began his career as a journalist, poet, critic and editor, but in a short time engaged in political activities, and finally became the Mayor of Philadelphia. He returned to his career of journalist and editor in the latter part of his life, when he became the sole owner of the "North American." Much has been said about Mor-

*Reprinted by permission, with slight alterations from The Philadelphia Record for Sunday, January 11, 1920.

ton McMichael's capabilities as a public administrator, and as a benefactory citizen. An attempt will be made in this article to dwell on the literary side of Morton McMichael.

Morton McMichael was born on October 20, 1807, in Burlington County, New Jersey. He came to Philadelphia as a child. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, and studied law in the office of David Paul Brown, and also under William M. Meredith. He was admitted to the Bar in 1827. However, already before he had become a member of the Bar, he was engaged as editor for the "Saturday Evening Post" in 1826. He soon entered upon a varied editorial career and was connected with several periodicals. In 1831 he was editor of the "Saturday Courier," and in 1836 he was connected with the "Saturday News." In 1842 he was one of the editors of "Godey's Ladies' Book," and his name appears on the title page of that once famous publication for the years of 1843 and 1844. While he was editor, many distinguished American Men of Letters contributed to Godey's, among them, James Russell Lowell and Edgar Allan Poe. In those days neither Lowell nor Poe had the great literary distinction that was soon to become theirs, and Morton McMichael was among the first to recognize their exceptional literary abilities.

McMichael in 1844 was also associated with "Neale's Gazette," and on January 1, 1847, transferred his activities to Graham's Magazine. After 1848, he was connected with the "North American," with Judge Conrad and Robert Montgomery Bird. In 1854, McMichael became the sole proprietor of the "North American."

The distinguishing feature of McMichael's work as editor was his liberality of mind and the encourage-

ment he gave to unknown authors. He helped to make Philadelphia a literary center in the forties, when the leading American writers were congregated here. He was on terms of intimacy with nearly all of them and was much beloved by them all.

Another trait of McMichael's was his singular modesty when his own productions were concerned. Many of them are buried unsigned in the files of those periodicals, and also in some of the newspapers, for which he once wrote, like the "Daily Chronicle," and all hope of tracing them has been lost. When he became the editor of the "North American," his policy was to speak kindly of people, to battle for ideals without attacking individuals.

Early in his career, McMichael became quite a renowned orator, and his orations show a supreme command of the English language. He was much in demand as an orator and a public speaker for the rest of his life. His powers as a speaker helped him to defy the mob who attempted to burn the Colored Orphans' Asylum, on 13th and Callowhill Streets, in 1838.

In the next year McMichael delivered a famous address on Popular Education before the Northern Lyceum of Philadelphia. This was published in pamphlet form and is accessible in our libraries. Eloquence and felicitous choice of words characterize his excellent addresses. McMichael's scholarship, showing his acquaintance with the ancient literature produced in the age of "The glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome," and his passionate enthusiasm for knowledge are also distinguishing traits of his addresses. One can enumerate but a few of the famous addresses that McMichael delivered during the course of his life. His speech at the Chinese

Museum, during the Irish Famine, was marked with great power. His Agricultural Address in Boston, Mass., on October 26, 1855, impressed Robert Winthrop and Edward Everett greatly. His speech on July 4, 1873, as president of the Park Commission, when he transferred the ground to the United States Centennial Commission, and his oration on the presentation of the John Welsh Endowment to the University of Pennsylvania, were both of a high order and were compared to the orations of Burke and Webster.

In all these orations the profusion of ideas and the choice of idiomatic English, show the literary man, which was still keenly alive within him. It should be stated that he greatly admired Milton's "Paradise Lost," which he always carried about with him.

McMichael entered politics about 1840, and this date marks off the period in his life when his literary activities were somewhat suspended.

He had several years previously also made quite a reputation as a poet. When he was only twenty-nine years of age, a poem of his called "Monody" was published in the "Philadelphia Book," in 1836. This is an eulogy on the death of one who was moved by great ambitions and died young. The poem reminds one of Hawthorne's celebrated tale "The Ambitious Guest." It was highly praised by Edgar Allan Poe in "Graham's Magazine" for December, 1841, in the article on Autography, which has since been included among Poe's collected works. Poe wrote as follows: "Mr. McMichael is well known to the Philadelphia public by the number and force of his prose, compositions, but he has seldom been tempted into book publication. As a poet, he has produced some remarkably vigorous things. I have seldom seen a finer composition than a certain celebrated Monody."

When one recalls the extreme severity with which Poe judged the verse of his contemporaries, and the acerbity and virulence with which he wrote of mediocre poetry, this is indeed great praise. Any poem that has merited such laudatory comment from so fine a critic and poet as Poe, deserves to be remembered, and the poem is here re-printed from the Philadelphia Book, where it appears on page 209.

MONODY.

Departed one, farewell!

A long—a last farewell we bid thee now:

Pale death hath set his signet on thy brow;

And in that dreamless cell,

Where worn mortality cast off its woes,

In blest oblivion of all earthly throes,

Where but the lifeless dwell,

Thou hast laid down in everlasting rest:

Care cannot reach thee now, nor grief distract thy
breast.

Unfortunate! thy soul

Was nobler far than men's of common mould;

But, through thy heart a tide of feeling roll'd

That might not brook control,

Nor be restrained in its impetuous course,

But onward rushed, as bounds an Arab horse,

Seeking his destined goal:

Thy spirit sought renown and this to gain,

Thou didst encounter toil and penury and pain.

Alas that man should bow
So slavishly before the phantom Fame
Or feverish thirst of an immortal name
Hath power to scathe the brow,
With the deep line of premature decay
Those outward tokens which too well display
What words may not avow—
The inly spirit's travail, and the pain,
That rolls in floods of fire across the aching brain.

Thine was a hapless fate!
Though genius girt thee with his magic spell,
And bright-eyed Fancy loved with thee to dwell,
And Thy rapt mind elate,
Born upwards on its viewless wings would soar
The empyrean through and all its heights explore;
Yet couldst thou not create,
With all thy gifted skill, the deathless name,
For which the bosom burned with an absorbing flame.

Thou wert but young to die!
Yet brief and transient as thy life hath been,
In gazing o'er its many colored scene,
Too much we may descry
Of deep and wasting care, and the keen sense,
Of injury and wrong, corroding and intense;
Then better thus to lie
In thine appointed house, the narrow grave,
Than be to this cold world a victim or a slave.

Lamented one! fond eyes
Have wept for thee till all their founts were dry,
And from fond lips hath burst the thrilling cry,
And moans and choking sighs,
Have swelled the anguished heart and that deep grief,

To which nor time nor change can bring relief,
Untimely sacrifice!
Friendship hath poured for thee the willing tear
And strangers mourned thy doom standing beside thy
bier.

Yet let us not repine
Thy loss of earth to thee is heavenly gain.
Thou hast exchanged a state of woe and pain
For one that's all divine;
And springing from the darkness of thy clay,
Uprisen in a new and glorious day:
The place of rest is thine,—
Thy race is o'er—thou hast obtained the goal,
Where mortal sin and strife no more possess control.

Morton McMichael also wrote a biography of another writer of the time, Richard Penn Smith; of this Poe said that it was "very well written." Mr. McMichael praised Smith's dramatic efforts, and Poe commented—"I have only to add that I have the highest respect for the judgment of Mr. McMichael."

After McMichael entered politics, he corresponded with several of the leading statesmen of the Country, among whom were Henry Clay, Senator Clayton, Breckenbridge, James Buchanan and General Scott. Some of these letters are in the possession of his son, Judge Charles B. McMichael, and are reprinted in this booklet for the first time. It should also be mentioned that Morton McMichael corresponded with many of the literary men, among the most notable of whom was William Makepeace Thackeray. A few pages about the friendship with Thackeray are also included in this booklet.

As Sheriff of Philadelphia during 1843 to 1846, McMichael suppressed the Anti-Catholic riots. He was Mayor of the City from 1866 to 1869.

When Morton McMichael died, on January 6th, 1879, great sorrow befell the city. All the newspapers had editorials attesting to the great veneration in which his rival newspapers held him, and tribute was paid to him at a public meeting in the Common Council Chamber, where speeches were delivered by Eli Kirk Price, General Robert Patterson, Daniel Dougherty, the silver-tongued orator and Col. John W. Forney. The courts were adjourned, meetings were held by the city Journalists and by the Board of Managers of the Commercial Exchange. In a memorial address held April 17, 1879, in the hall of the Historical Society of Penna., Col. Forney said of McMichael, "This one man seems to me in his own sphere to have well filled in a quiet way more human conditions and enjoyed more human pleasures and given more satisfaction in return to his fellow creatures than any other within my knowledge or reading."

Many years later, Philadelphia showed its tribute to McMichael by having erected a statue of him in Fairmount Park, on the East side of the Schuylkill River, below Girard Avenue bridge.

McMichael was a type of the genial and courteous gentleman, who in spite of being both a newspaper man and politician, created no enemies. He was very democratic, though in his veins flowed the blood of old Colonial families. He was willing to listen to the cause of the most humble individual and he mingled freely with all. There was nothing artificial about him, and human kindness seemed a second nature to him. He was generally loved by the people who worked with him as much as by his friends. I

include herein two letters attesting to his qualities, one by George G. Pierie, who worked for him, and one by the late J. G. Rosengarten.

He was distinctly the literary man who had entered public life, but still retained his literary interests. These stood him in great stead in his many public addresses and in the many after dinner speeches which he delivered. In the thirty years with which his name was connected with the "North American," he raised the plane of that paper to a very high standard and made Philadelphia Journalism much respected throughout the country. He was always interested in pleading for truth, justice and never descended into the mire of personal abuse. Not inferior to his great work as Mayor of the City and editor of the "North American" were his services in giving Philadelphia its literary tone in the forties, when he wrote for "Graham's Magazine," and "Godey's Ladies' Book," and did much to develop literary talent in this city.

In the history of Philadelphia, the name of Morton McMichael must be reckoned with and Dr. Ellis P. Oberholtzer refers to him quite frequently in his "Literary History of Philadelphia," as well as in the history of Philadelphia.

In a final resume, Morton McMichael probably appears most attractive to us when hobnobbing with Poe and discussing books and literature with Richard Penn Smith, Judge Conrad, Robert M. Bird and others.

HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

PRESERVED BY

MORTON McMICHAEL

FROM

NICHOLAS BIDDLE, SENATOR JOHN M. CLAYTON, GENERAL
WINFIELD SCOTT, SENATOR JOHN J. CRITTEN-
DEN, HENRY CLAY AND PRESIDENT
JAMES BUCHANNAN.

The following letters received by Morton McMichael during various periods of his career have hitherto never been published before. McMichael, who destroyed the correspondence he received, preserved these letters no doubt on account of the national prominence of the writers. The originals of these letters are in the possession of Judge McMichael. The writers are the famous banker Nicholas Biddle, Senator John M. Clayton, of Delaware, Secretary of State under Taylor, and famous because of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty; General Winfield Scott; Senator John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, famous as a Governor and as United States Attorney General; Henry Clay, and President James Buchanan.

The long letter from Henry Clay, dated September 16th, 1848, is of unusual historical importance, and sheds some new light on American history during the period when Clay was spoken of for the Presidency and defeated for the nomination by General Taylor. *I respectfully call the attention of American historians to this letter.*

ALBERT MORDELL.

Oct. 13, 1843.

Morton McMichael, Esq.

Phila.

My dear Sir,

When a citizen has achieved any great triumph, it is a natural duty to visit those who have elevated him and return civilities for their kindness. If he should even exceed a little the bounds of this empire, and step over into an adjoining province to shake hands with well wishers who cannot go to see him, he will in so doing by no means compromise his official dignity.

Such thoughts came into my mind when I first saw your success*—and my present purpose is to say that whenever you can find leisure to come and see me I shall be happy to receive you. Say the same to our friend Judge Conrad, whom it will rejoice me to see and if Mr. Godey inclines to come up with “the Sherra” as he once did with the Editor he will do me a singular favor.

I beg to assure you that in this election your prospects were those which most occupied my thoughts and that no one rejoices more sincerely in your success, than

Yrs with true regard,

N. BIDDLE.

*McMichael was then elected Sheriff.

New Castle—Del., July 13, 1844.

My dear McMichael,

Hurra for Clayton McMichael! That fellow is destined to be a hero. He was born *flagrante bello*. The shouts of the combatants and the roar of artillery and arms rung in the little one's ears (God bless him!) on his first entrance to this troublesome and noisy world. I have set my heart on making him a hero, and have *sworn to stand by him* as well as his father, till my gray head is cold. Present me most affectionately as his *Godfather* to his mother and ever honoured may she be!

Public opinion is now all turning in your favour wherever it had been perverted or poisoned against you. *All here* are for Morton McMichael; and Bird has actually quarreled with and cursed everybody he could meet, who did not at once agree to a favorite position of his videlicet; that the aforesaid Morton McMichael has proved that he has more sound sense than any other man in Philadelphia. He actually *raved away* to a youth of 19 named *Alger* (who had just returned from the city and said you had not done your duty) till the youth *cried* and admitted what Bird insisted on, that he was (rather) *an ass*!

David R. Porter has won golden opinions here by his sayings in Philada. Tell him to have nothing to do with Polk berries. They would poison him. I did all I could for his brother, James, who has made a great mistake since. Clay will be elected, no matter how Pa. goes.

May God bless you and protect you! My heart has within the last two weeks ached a thousand times

through fear that some cursed unlucky bullet might reach yours amidst the confusion of these infernal riots.

I have (in confidence) just written an article on the Zollverein Treaty for Gaby & Seaton. It starts for W. by mail this morning—but the rascality of the intermediate post offices renders its passage to W. uncertain. Look in the next week's papers for it.

Ever faithfully your friend,

JOHN M. CLAYTON.

Washington—Jany. 12, 1845.

My dear McMichael,

The Oregon debate in the Senate was this day postponed till Monday the 10th February next.

We shall move to amend the resolution so as to *permit* (not require) the Prest. when in his judgt. the welfare of the nation requires it, to give the notice. *We gain strength* & I begin to believe we shall compel these fellows to settle this Oregon dispute. Things look well—very well. The two C's & I had a long & full understanding to day again *inter nos*. G. Davis's minority report in the House is an error. *Congress* is the body to give the notice.

In haste & in confidence,

Ever faithfully yours,

JNO. M. CLAYTON.

Ridicule the idea that the notice is equivalent to a declaration of war. Fudge! When a bill to occupy the territory to the exclusion of the British north of the River comes up, *then* we shall make a *stand*.

P. S. I believe the N York Legislature will unanimously (Colingsdale) *instruct for notice*.

Office, Wednesday, June 24, '46.

My dear Sir:

Returning home, from my office, last night, I found your card, & I went immediately to Capitol Hill to visit my sick friends Clayton & Crittenden—as well as to learn of the former where I might find you. Coming back, I stopped at Coleman's, in the hope of taking you & luggage, home with me. I left a card to that effect. I hope you will occupy the room—or at least, take a plate with me today—say at 1/2 past 4 o'clock. I prefer the former.

I am much occupied in my office till 4 P. M. & then again till 9 at night.

Yr friend

WINFIELD SCOTT.

Tomorrow, I have agreed to dine with my friend Winthrop—not having dined out, in 5 weeks, nor seen Pennsylvania Avenue, in that time, till I went to the funeral yesterday.

W. S.

M. McMichael Esq.

Frankfort—April 29th 1847.

My dear Sir,

I commenced a letter to you on the 7th of this month, but was interrupted, and till now have not been able to resume the task.

Your letter was received and concurring entirely in your suggestions, I immediately wrote to Genl Taylor—giving him some account of you, & inclosing to him your letter, with such remarks as I thought might sustain and enforce your views.

I think we may rest assured that Genl Taylor will not allow himself to be drawn into any act of impropriety or indiscretion on the subject alluded to. In truth, he does not *wish* for the Presidency, and therefore has none of those *weaknesses* which that ambition produces, & which render men so easy to be led astray. While he is at the head of our Army in Mexico, he will be “General Taylor”—nothing more & nothing else—He will not, as I think he ought not, mix himself up at all with Presidential or political questions or matters—At the proper time, I have no doubt, he will consent to serve in the office of President, if his country should require it, and then he will do it, as I verily believe, more from regard to the public will, than from any wish of his own—Such a character is not very likely to be tempted into any act of indiscretion on the subject, and, being forewarned, he can not now be surprised into that which we feared.

Taylor is the all Hail here—The popularity of Genl Jackson or Genl Harrison was nothing, so far as my observation extends to that which Taylor now enjoys.

He would now carry the State of Kent'y by more than 50,000 votes—In him we have the Victory as certain as he lives—Enthusiasm for him seems to govern the whole land.

I see from your paper that our friend, J M. Clayton, calls his farm & residence Buena Vista—I didn't need that evidence to assure me that he had been thrown into the enthusiastic State—How I should like to have him to parade, for one night, before you & I, with old Rough & Ready for his subject—and his boy, Bill, in the back ground to give us occasionally a little "aid & comfort"—It would be a scene worth enjoying.

If you should see Clayton shortly, give him my kindest regards, & my congratulations on our great Whig prospects.

Very respectfully

Yr Friend &c

J J CRITTENDEN

Morton McMichael Esq.

Ashland 1st Dec. 1847.

My dear Sir

I recd your favor of the 24th ulto. and return enclosed the rough draught of my resolutions, with the endorsement on them requested, to which you and my young friend, your son, attach too much importance.

The important point of my resolutions was that suggesting that Congress has the Constitutional power, and that it is its bounden duty, to specify the objects for which the War with Mexico shall be further prosecuted. If it will fulfill that duty, I am persuaded that we shall soon have peace. If the Press concur with me on these opinions, ought it not to present them in the strongest light? And ought not public meetings of the People every where to proclaim their concurrence?

Your friend

H. CLAY

Morton McMichael Esq.

P. S. Entre nous, all Kentucky will soon come out for a Nat. Convention to nominate Candidates for P. & V. P.

H. C.

(Private)

Ashland 16th Sept. 1848.

My dear Sir

Before I received today your favor of the 9th instant, I had written to N. York, to Virginia & to Ohio stating that I could not consent to accept a nomination of me for the Presidency, if it were tendered; and that I could not consent to any further use of my name, in connection with that office. Some of these letters, or authorized paragraphs from them, will have been published prior to your receipt of this letter.

I have discountenanced & discouraged all movements in my behalf, since the Philada. Convention.

Beyond this I will not go. I cannot, as I am urged to do, take any active part in the Canvass, nor can I endorse General Taylor as a Whig. I, who for more than twenty years of my life, have been honestly and sincerely opposing the election of mere Military men for the Presidency, am not going to give the lie to myself, and step forward to support the noisiest military chieftain ever presented, as a Candidate for that office, to the American people.

I think the Philada. Convention has placed the Whig party in a humiliating condition. It suffered itself to be menaced or frightened into a nomination, which it ought never to have made. It yielded to the overbearing influence of some Southern & S. Western members of Congress. It proceeded upon the degrading assumption that the gullibility and not the intelligence of the people would decide the election. It had no authentic assurance, under the hand of Genl Taylor, revoking his insulting declaration that he would con-

tinue to stand as an Independent Candidate whoever the Convention might nominate; and yet it caught with avidity at a mere hocus pocus explanation of his position made by the Louisiana delegation, upon an unproduced letter alleged to be from him.

I believe him to be wholly incompetent to the office. I lament to say that from circumstances which have fallen within my knowledge, I believe that he has practised duplicity, that he is vacillating and unstable.

I cannot recommend my friends to vote for such a person. I do not seek to shake or change their opinions of him, but they must act on their own responsibility. I will not be instrumental in deceiving or misleading them. I will not expose myself to their reproaches, if, being elected, they should be afterwards disappointed in his administration.

The success of Genl Taylor will be to establish simply a *personal* party, the head of which has no known principles, and the course of his administration will depend upon the unknown hands into which he must inevitably fall. And who they will be, according to the importunate weakness of poor human nature, we may conjecture that they will be those who fawn upon and flatter him the most.

I cannot lend myself to the accomplishment of such objects. Out of deference to my friends, who take a different view of the matter, I forbear to make any opposition to his election. I remain silent and passive. My great solicitude now, that my public career is terminated, is to preserve unsullied my character.

But I have another reason for my forbearance—I can give no support to Genl Cass. I deprecate his election. The case, as it presents itself to me, is between the frying pan and the fire I wish to avoid both; but if I make any choice it will be of the former.

You will find, I think, that Genl T. has two characters, one his own, and the other alien, but covered by a *Bliss*.

This letter you will regard confidential; but I have no desire to conceal, and you are at liberty to publish, that, "whilst I feel the greatest obligations and under the deepest gratitude to my friends, who will wish for my election as President, I cannot accept of any nomination for that office, and I am not willing that my name should be further used in connection with it."

I neither think it just nor *politic* to treat them with any abusive or harsh epithets.

I am truly & faithfully

Your friend &c

H. CLAY.

Morton McMichael Esq.

Ashland 7th April 1849.

My dear Sir

Your very kind letter of the 13th ulto. addressed to me at N. Orleans, followed and reached me here. I perused attentively, and with much pleasure, the article in the N. American to which my attention was called. I owe most of the praise and commendation which it bestows, with so much eloquence and liberality, to the generosity of your nature and to the fidelity of your friendship.

I regret deeply that there is no encouraging prospect of the adoption of the scheme of gradual emancipation of the African race, at the approaching Convention, as proposed by me, or any other scheme. This inauspicious state of things is to be ascribed to the individual and unwise interference, on the subject of slavery, by violent abolitionists in other States, to the jealousy existing between the two rival parties of Whigs and Democrats in Kentucky, each fearing that the other might obtain some advantage over it, and to the timidity of leading individuals among us, in supporting their real sentiments.

All this I knew when I wrote the letter, which has called forth an expression of your approbation; but I could not, towards the close of my life, relinquish the inestimable privilege of freely expressing my sentiments on a great public matter, however they might be received by the public.

I am truly Your friend

H. CLAY

Morton McMichael Esq.

Washington, Nov. 29/50.

My dear Sir:

For one month I have been over worked, 1. On ordinary office business; 2. Presiding over a Board of army officers; 3. Writing my annual report, & 4. Receiving and setting up furniture (from N. York) in a house at this place. And during this month I have received an unusual number of private letters—of great interest & importance—not one of which have I yet answered. Among these your kind letter demands my special notice & thanks. I ought also to write to our friend, Clayton, who has, like yourself, laid me under new & weighty obligations.

But what can, or ought, I to say to kind & valuable friends, beyond the tender of my grateful respects & thanks? On political questions I do not intend to write or to converse except most sparingly, as I may chance to fall in, face to face, with persons entitled to my perfect confidence such as C. & yourself. You, probably, in the course of the winter my visit this place, on business or pleasure. I shall always be happy to meet you any & every where.

Met Clayton—dinner was certainly a grand affair, independent of the allusion to me, & I congratulate our friend on the high & just estimate placed on his public services & personal virtues by his neighbors & recent constituents.

In haste,

Most truly Yrs

WINFIELD SCOTT.

M. McMichael Esq.

Friday 26 December.

My dear Sir

I am anxious to see you and know of no other mode than to invite you to a family dinner today. I am not yet "fixed" in my home, but still can give my friends a hearty welcome. Please, then, to come at 4 o'clock. You shall have good wine and a hearty welcome, if not a good dinner.

From your friend

Sincerely

JAMES BUCHANAN

M. McMichael Esq.

SOME NOTES FROM THACKERAY TO
MORTON McMICHAEL*

Thackeray brought a letter to Mr. McMichael from an Ex-Minister.

One evening at a supper Thackeray dropped his pocketbook. It was returned to him at New York. He wrote:

Clarendon, New York, Feb. 2, 1853.

Dear McMichael:

The portemonnaie is mine sure enough. The New York tailor made me a breeches pocket incapable of retention of portemannaies—when shall I learn to keep that receptacle buttoned.

Thank you for the paper, but I didn't use the concluding words in Philadelphia which appear in the *New York American*. I only used them once at New York and just alluded to the children at home as being thankful for the good done them. One mustn't be always bringing the kids forward.

Reed's article is very pleasant reading, and I must make him and Messrs. the Editors my very best bow of acknowledgement.

Surely I shall get a chance of seeing you all again in Philadelphia ere long. I hope so, and am yours always, dear McMichael,

W. M. THACKERAY.

*It is unknown to Judge McMichael who possesses the originals of the Thackeray notes. I copied the letters from The Chicago Times of June 12th, 1887. Thanks are due to Mrs. William A. Read, of New York City, who kindly permitted me to copy the clipping in a scrap-book she owns. A. M.

A later allusion to the incident is as follows:

“Received of Morton McMichael, Esq., portemonnaie which contained 11 dollars, a piece of stone and a watchkey once. The stone and key remain with their other memorials of McMichael’s fidelity—the dollars have passed away like many of the griefs and pleasures of

W. M. THACKERAY.

“Playful Impromptu—Mr. Thackeray having dropped his purse at the festive-table of Morton McMichael, Esq., of Philadelphia, received the purse and its contents a few days after from his friend, whom he thanked in the following lines:

“McMichael, who sent me my cash and my purse,
May count on my friendship for better or worse.”

The following letter was written on the flap of an envelope, containing, probably, one of the preceding notes:

My dear McMichael:

Lest you should be making a party for Tuesday I write to him to say I am engaged to dinner on that day. Am not well, and must bear myself very soberly and cautiously. So please let us not have that jollification.

Yours ever,

W. M. THACKERAY.

The following letter was written after Thackeray returned to England:

My dear MacMichael:

Should the bearer of this, my friend Captain Glynn, come to your village, I bespeak for him your kindness and hospitality. I wish I were coming with him. I wished as much the other day when I saw poor Reed in London before his departure in that fatal Arctic. Let us hope next year I may visit you. If all people will be but as glad to see me as I to see you, what a welcome I shall have!

I send my best regards to Dr. Bird, Dr. Bird, the novelist, whom I have just been reading.

The trade may be dead in another year in England,—I fear if this war continues of ours. The dreadful interest so far surpasses all our fictions.

Believe me always yours

Dear MacMichael,

W. M. THACKERAY.

36 Crislow 2 Square, Crompton, London.

APPENDIX

TRIBUTES FROM J. G. ROSENGARTEN *

AND GEORGE G. PIERIE TO
MORTON McMICHAEL

J. G. Rosengarten,
1704 Walnut Street.

Philadelphia, Nov. 19th, 1921.

Albert Mordell, Esq.,
723 North American Building,
Philadelphia.

Dear Sir:—

Thanks for the privilege of reading your tribute to the memory of Morton McMichael. Why not print with it the letter to him, so piously preserved by his son, Judge McMichael, as the best proof of the high regard in which he was held by his friends? There was one feature of his social life that deserves mention,—he was the life and soul of the informal gatherings that in his day marked this city. There were frequent social meetings at Wm. D. Lewis' and at Henry C. Carey's—a notable figure with Vespers on Sunday afternoons at his hospitable home,—when all notable visitors were heartily welcomed. Mr. McMichael was leader in all the social life of Philadelphia that was so heartily appreciated by all strangers here. It was a marked feature of this city in his day and was greatly appreciated by its guests. So too

* Mr. Rosengarten has died since.

at his office in the newspapers and magazines with which he was connected, there was a constant succession of visitors representing all sections of this country and many foreigners. His warm welcome was always valued, and he did much to make this city the centre of a hearty hospitality. Does not Thackeray speak of him as one of his hosts during his visits here, and did not Wm. B. Reed refer to it in a paper—"Haud Immemor"—of which a copy can no doubt be found in the Phila. Library? I can recall the welcome given by young contributors to the U. S. Gazette and the North American, when he was Editor, and the thoroughly representative character in which he stood for Philadelphia at all public occasions.

A reproduction of his addresses and correspondence—if his letters have been preserved—would serve to renew the high esteem in which he was held by all who knew him.

Yrs. Truly,

J. G. ROSENGARTEN

Albert Mordell, Esq.

To:

Albert Mordell, Esq.,

710 North American Bldg.,

Philadelphia.

January 21st, 1921.

Dear Sir:—

In answer to your request for a few words about Morton McMichael, I am only too glad to add my tribute to this great Editor and Citizen, whose friendship I was privileged to enjoy.

I met him before I was employed under him on the North American, in 1866, and can testify to the fact

that during the thirteen years I acted as Financial and Commercial Editor under him, I found him one of the most genial and delightful employers. He never rebuked anyone or spoke an unkind or harsh word. He was, in my opinion, one of the greatest Editors America ever had. He colored the Paper with his personality, which was a gentle and kindly one. He was what I would call a high class politician, utterly free from any suspicion of moral taint whatsoever. It is not generally known that he was three times mentioned for U. S. Senator; in my opinion, had he been elected, he would have made a great one. He was a leader of men, had hosts of friends and no enemies. He was not only the greatest after-dinner speaker I ever heard, but was one of the greatest orators it has ever been my privilege to hear.

I can attest to my great affection and esteem for Morton McMichael when I say I never pass by his Statue in Fairmount Park, on the East side of the Schuylkill River, near Girard Avenue, but I take my hat off to it, in reverence and memory of the man.

In conclusion, let me characterize him as a follower of the great Arab described by Leigh Hunt in his poem, "Abou Ben Adhem," as a lover of his fellow men.

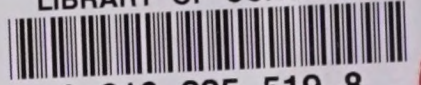
Very sincerely,

GEORGE G. PIERIE.

THE END.

APR 8 1921

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